

← on the willingness and ability of the family to support him during a long period of study. A particularly promising youngster of a poor family might occasionally be underwritten by the clan or village. Whatever his means of financial support, his success in the examinations was a reflection of proper upbringing and honored his family and, to a lesser extent, his clan and village almost as much as himself. The wealth usually accumulated by an official during his career also materially enhanced the village and clan as well as the family. For these reasons, reflected glory accrued to the kin of an illustrious scholar or official for generations after his death.

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C. Political Role

To a remarkable extent, the Chinese imperial system operated by moral suasion with a minimum use of force and without a developed, codified system of law. This achievement was made possible through the state's utilization of the family as a training ground for loyalty to the state and the virtues prized by it as part of the machinery of government. The root virtue of filial piety was extolled above all others in the Confucian system. It denoted not only the obedience and devotion of the son to his father but of the younger to the elder, and of the subject to the ruler.

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Two types of organizations built on the foundation of the family were utilized by the state in maintaining peace and uniformity throughout the empire. One was the clan, or tsu. It

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With the Communist regime's emphases on youth, loyalty to the state, socialist construction, and the rooting out of feudalistic and bourgeois ideas, the problem of the proper attitude of youth toward parents needed clarification. An article on the subject in the January 1955 issue of China Youth emphasizes that "respect for one's parents is part of... individual or social Communist morals," but the attitude "must be governed by the interests of the Revolution." If the parents are counterrevolutionaries, they should not be respected but treated as enemies; if they are counterrevolutionaries who have been pardoned by the people and are still able to work, they should be made to "reform through labor," and should not be pitied or helped. Only if they are unable to support themselves should they be aided by the children, "for if the children do not support them, then the burden will fall on the state, which is obviously undesirable." As to bourgeois parents, they should normally be shown respect and concern; but if they break the law, "the children should justly and dispassionately examine their crime." Working class parents "should of course be respected, loved, and taken care of." They should not be discriminated against or ridiculed because of the shortcomings they have inherited from the old regime, but "should be patiently persuaded to see the light." 35

35. Ibid., 973, pp. 30-32.

A. Good and Bad

In traditional China the prevailing belief was that man was inherently good and that socially harmful behavior occurred only when men lacked guidance or were placed in adverse circumstances. For example, if the ruler of the state or his officials or the father of the family failed to provide for the basic physical needs of individuals, their dependents were likely to rebel. Or if those in authority failed to provide instruction, particularly if they failed to set an example in conduct, then those subordinate to them would have no guideposts to the good and would fall into evil ways. 577
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Bad conduct was not, as in the West, violation of the laws of God but deviation from the age-old norms of acceptable social behavior. Specifically, behavior was categorized as "bad" if it went against such prescribed norms as the following: (1) hsiao, filial submission to fathers and elders; (2) chung, loyal and submissive devotion to superiors; (3) hsin, good faith among friends and associates; (4) jen, benevolence or fellow-feeling which should inform all social relationships; (5) i, righteousness in one's dealings with others; (6) li [good form] accepted procedures in human relations; (7) lien, integrity; and (8) ch'ih, sense of shame.

[footnote No. 3 continued]

1950, pp. 16-17. For Mao, of course, the term means the ultimate world-wide Communist utopia.

4. For example, as late as 1941-43, one anthropologist found that in rural Yunan the traditional value of hsiao (filial submission) was still, as it had been for centuries, "the foundation stone... of social organization, ... the measuring stick of all behavior and of the worth of the individual.

The laws of imperial China provided heavy punishments for violations of these norms; the most heinous crimes were those against hsiao, filial submission. Yet the ideal in the application of law was not blindfold justice but punishment administered with due regard for "human feelings" [jen-ching] and for the specific circumstances surrounding the crime. This attitude is illustrated in the old proverb: "There is one thing worse than a dishonest official and that is an honest official," which expresses disapproval of a rigorous enforcement of rules and regulations, of an enforcement that fails to take in account "human feelings."⁵ The criteria for judging behavior as good or bad were therefore neither religious nor legalistic, but were the prevailing norms in the community, the customary practices sanctioned by tradition and ratified by a high degree of community consensus.

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In traditional China goodness could be cultivated through practice, study, and contemplation. Confucianism held that the path to goodness was open to all, that those who attained a high order of goodness should be a moral elite, a group of exemplars for others. This moral elite was also, in Confucian theory, the group which should hold and exercise political power and enjoy the rewards of status and wealth. This notion sanctioned the long political dominance of the scholar-official.

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5. Ruth Benzel and John Weakland, "An Anthropological Approach to Chinese Communism," Columbia University Research in Contemporary Cultures, New York, 1952, pp. 80-81. Hereafter cited as Bunzel-Weakland.

6. Liu Shao-ch'i, "The Training of the Communist Party Member," first presented as a speech in 1939; cf. translation in Boyd Compton, Mao's China, Seattle, 1952, p. 146.

The Chinese Communists have laid out new standards of good and bad. In the words of their leading theoretician, their aim is "...to reform mankind into the completely selfless citizenry of a Communist society." ⁵⁷⁷ 6 In setting the new standards the Communists have consciously and unconsciously selected concepts from traditional moral ideas; some have been discarded, others have been taken over with little adaptation; still others linger between the lines and in the implications of Communist utterances.

The old virtues associated with the traditional family have been discarded because the old family system has been dissolved, its functions taken over by the modern conjugal family on the one hand and by state and Party organizations on the other. ⁵⁷⁶ 577 Familial virtues are castigated as "feudal" and as backward features of what the leadership calls "the squalid old society of China." ⁸

The basic Marxist dogma that the individual ⁸²⁹ is molded by his class position and, indirectly, by the "stage" of the society into which he is born has a good deal in common with the Confucian view of the prime importance of environment in the formation of character. Thus the Communist effort to create a new society, in both traditional Chinese and Marxist terms, will create a favorable environment for the development of individual goodness. But the "goodness" expected is differ-

7. J. M. H. Lindbeck, "Communist Policy and the Chinese Family," Far Eastern Survey, No. 20 (July 25, 1951), pp. 137-41.

8. Liu Shao-ch'i, quoted in David S. Nivison, Communist Ethics and Chinese Tradition, Stanford University, 1954, p. 15. Nivison's study will appear in a symposium, Thought and Officialdom in China, University of Chicago Press, early 1956.